

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Weir River Estuary Park Committee**  
**Thursday, August 31, 2021, 4:00pm**  
**Remote - Call in Meeting**

This is a Tri-Town Committee, appointed by the Boards of Selectmen for Cohasset, Hingham and Hull, not a non-profit Watershed Association. Formed in 2002 approved in 2005, the goals of the WREP Committee are; to **Preserve** the rare and idyllic setting, **Expand** public access and low impact recreational opportunities, **Protect** the historical and geological integrity, **Protect** and restore natural resources and biological diversity, **Conserve** a contiguous corridor of open space and healthy habitats, **Develop** educational opportunities and foster stewardship, **Establish** Community support for land and estuarine habitat protection and maintain working relationships with Town Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, Planning Boards and Advisory, Open Space and Harbor Development committees, local Land Trusts, Land preservation organizations, and related regional state and federal agencies.

1. **Call to Order** by Sharon Allen (Hin), Patti Coyle (Hin) Dick Avery (Coh), Tom Bell (Coh), Judeth Van Hamm (Hul), Scott Plympton (Hul), Clark Frazier (Hin), Mark Bounagurio (Hin)
2. **Minutes** from the meeting 3/29/21 were approved for posting. Minutes from 6/29/21 were also approved.

**3. Updates by Town:**

**Cohasset:** Tom Bell (SPWA) reports:

- a. The Stormwater Management Plan of Hull has uncovered issues. There is no oil/water separator. In a letter to Hull, SWPA has requested the feasibility proposal for a more elaborate stormwater system. Hull has not responded.
- b. Tide Gate repair: SPWA has reached out to Hull Conservation and Town Manager. The tide gate stewardship under Hull's Chris Krahforst has been lacking. Flood control is manually operated. The tide gate needs to be repaired and automated. Hull has not responded.
- c. Salinity Levels: Despite low salinity from heavy rains and warmer water this year midge hatches have been modest. The triggers for midge hatches remain unknown.
  - i. As previously noted, there is a proposal to increase tidal flow in Straits Pond by removing approximately 100 cu yds. of fill. Testing shows the Pond has a similar salinity level as the Estuary.
  - ii. Tom recently spoke with a local resident who described a wooden bridge out to the island. Which was replaced by two culverts and stone and earth fill. Historic air photos may show the old bridge. Now there is no bridge, and this area has been filled in. If a bridge was restored, it would improve water flow to the Richards Road area water and potentially improve the midge issue.
  - iii. Nitrate monitoring: We previously noted that 90% of the nitrogen loads in Cohasset, while 10% are in Hull. Hingham may be a major contributor to nitrogen in the estuary. CSCR has no testing tools, but SPWA may acquire the tools necessary to analyze water samples for nitrate.

- d. There is an opening for a member of SPWA to be a liaison to the Town of Hull. Tom Bell will move from that position to liaison from the Cohasset Conservation Commission to the Straits Pond Technical Advisory Committee.

**Hull:**

- a) Scott has repeatedly attempted to talk with the Hull Town Manager on the proposal to construct a foot trail to Island in Straits Pond via Eastman Road. The outstanding question is whether the Town of Hull owns Eastman Road, or it is a private way. Ownership must be determined by town officials. No response provided.
  - a. Judith says the town owns Eastman Rd. Lowry Reed has a map from 1930's showing Eastman Road is a right of way. This map has been provided to the town. A town official was needed to research and confirm this.
  - b. What do the Town Assessors say?
- b) Lack of response is concerning. How do we move this forward? Judith is recommending that we make an appointment with the Select Board.
- c) Judith is coordinating a Woods Walk with the Hull 5<sup>th</sup> Graders. No update.
- d) Clark Frazier reported that the "Danger" signs at the Straits Pond Tidal Gate have been damaged and needs repair. The Warning buoy has been swept into the pond.
  - a. Action: Scott will reach out to the Hull Harbor Master.

**Hingham:**

**Update on Landmark Recovery, Patti**

On August 6<sup>th</sup>, Patti Coyle & neighbor Bill Sarni noticed Facebook public relations posts that Landmark Recovery, a company co-founded by Hingham resident Cliff Boyle and his son Matt, would like to open a 460-bed substance abuse recovery facility at 57 and 59 George Washington Blvd. and 124 Rockland St. in Hingham near the courthouse. Another son, CJ Boyle, is the project manager; he hopes to come before the Hingham Sewer Commission in September to discuss development on 3 of the 9 parcels owned by Cliff Boyle in the Weir River estuary. No formal applications for this development project have been filed with any Town Departments at this time.

Currently there are no unallocated sewer hookups available in the Weir River Sewer District's inventory, which essentially limits new development here. Mr. Boyle already has rights to 2 or 3 sewer connections for single-family homes on his land. In October 1996, Hingham and Hull entered an Intermunicipal Agreement which allows Hingham to discharge up to an average daily flow of 65,000 gallons per day from the Weir River Sewer District (~200 properties served) to the Hull Wastewater Treatment Plant [WTP]. Sewer Commission meeting minutes of June 10, 2021, show that Town Counsel verified that the Intermunicipal Agreement expires in 2028.

Regardless of available capacity at Hull's WTP or the need for a facility of this type in Hingham, further discussion of this project on these parcels is moot unless Hull & Hingham Select Boards meet and 2 members from Hingham vote to expand the Intermunicipal Agreement.

The Weir River estuary was designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) -- one of only 30 in MA -- in 1986. The Weir River itself was classified as "Highly Stressed" by MA Water Resources Commission in 2005. Per the Clean Water Act and ACEC program, no land use, stormwater runoff or groundwater flow can contaminate or exceed water standards set for designated river water use. A development of this density in this area appears to be a non-starter.

**National Estuaries Week 9/18-25/21**

National Estuaries Week -- Sept 18th-25th, 2021 -- is an annual celebration and campaign to increase public awareness of estuaries and to encourage people to become involved in the protection of these important natural resources. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year that Patti has used Facebook to promote the Weir River estuary among the local groups on social media in the 3 Towns, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> time showcasing local artists whose works are inspired by the natural beauty here. Harbor Media has already filmed a drone tour of Foundry Pond & Straits Pond. Artists Bill Sarni, Susan Hagstrom, Bob Mosher and Mike Sleeper have signed up to be filmed this year for the Harbor Media You Tube playlist, talking about their art and why this estuary is part of their portfolio. They will also be showcased in Facebook slideshows along with Bob Beaulieu and Adrienne Richardson (and maybe one or two others).

- 4. Next meeting scheduled via remote call in for Tuesday October 26, 2021, at 4pm.**
- 5. Meeting Adjourned at 5:49pm**